

2204 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING  
WASHINGTON, DC 20515-0530  
(202) 225-3976

DISTRICT OFFICE:  
8436 WEST THIRD STREET  
SUITE 600  
LOS ANGELES, CA 90048-4183  
(323) 651-1040  
(818) 878-7400  
(310) 652-3095

SENIOR DEMOCRATIC MEMBER  
COMMITTEE ON  
GOVERNMENT REFORM

MEMBER  
COMMITTEE ON  
ENERGY AND COMMERCE

**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
**Washington, DC 20515-0530**

HENRY A. WAXMAN  
30TH DISTRICT, CALIFORNIA

**H.R. 2357, The "Houses of Worship Political Speech Protection Act"**  
**October 1, 2002**

**Congressional Record Statement**

By Henry A. Waxman

Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong opposition to H.R. 2357, which would change the tax code to allow religious non-profit organizations to engage in political activity, use tax-exempt contributions for political purposes, and enable religious leaders to endorse candidates from their pulpit.

This legislation is a serious mistake and would be a grave violation of the constitutional separation between church and state.

The real purpose of the bill appears to be helping special interest groups circumvent campaign finance laws by channeling fundraising, contribution, and endorsement activity through religious organizations. We all know that charitable, tax-deductible donations are easier to raise than political contributions. And religious non-profits are the only institutions that do not have to publicly file annual IRS tax reports.

If this ill-conceived bill became law, congregants may have to begin checking the political leanings of their rabbi or preacher before joining congregations. Is that what we want? Do we want annual membership dues ending up in campaign coffers? Are we so greedy for campaign cash that we're willing to violate sacred houses of worship and threaten the integrity of religion?

I'm not ready for that. Under existing law, religious leaders already have tremendous latitude in their ability to discuss political issues. Religious institutions can even set up affiliate organizations to raise non-deductible funds for political activity, that rightfully must be reported to the IRS and publicly disclosed. That is why the National Council of Churches has called this bill "unnecessary, unwise and unwanted."

I urge my colleagues to reject H.R. 2357. It would only promote abuse of campaign finance laws, abuse of the tax code, and abuse of our nation's founding principle of religious freedom.